

ANNEX I

EMERGENCY PUBLIC INFORMATION

CITY OF HOUSTON

APPROVAL & IMPLEMENTATION

Annex I

EMERGENCY PUBLIC INFORMATION

ANNEX REDACTED – DATA REMOVED

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Approval & Implementation	ii
Table of Contents	iii
Authority	1
Purpose.....	1
Explanation of Terms.....	1
Situation and Assumptions	1
Concept of Operations	2
Organization & Assignment of Responsibilities.....	5
Direction and Control	7
Readiness Levels.....	8
Administration and Support.....	8
Annex Development & Maintenance.....	9
References.....	9

Appendices

1. Emergency Public Information Needs	10
2. Media Contact Roster	13
3. Working With the Media	14
4. Media Access & Identification	15
5. List of Pre-Scripted Emergency Messages	16
6. Emergency Public Information Checklists	17

ANNEX I

EMERGENCY PUBLIC INFORMATION

I. AUTHORITY

See the City of Houston Basic Plan, Volume I.

II. PURPOSE

The purpose of this annex is to outline the means, organization, and process by which the City will provide appropriate information and instructions to the public during emergency situations. This annex also provides for disaster-related public education to be conducted in advance of emergency situations to reduce the likelihood of citizens placing themselves in hazardous situations that may require an emergency response.

III. EXPLANATION OF TERMS

A. Acronyms

GDEM	Governor's Division of Emergency Management
EAS	Emergency Alert System
EMC	Emergency Management Coordinator
EOC	Emergency Operations Center
EPI	Emergency Public Information
IC	Incident Commander
ICP	Incident Command Post
JIC	Joint Information Center
LWP	Local Warning Point
OEM	City's Office of Emergency Management
PIO	Public Information Officer
TV	Television

B. Definitions

Emergency Public Information (EPI): Information provided to citizens during emergency situations to protect personal health, safety, and property or how to obtain available assistance.

IV. SITUATION & ASSUMPTIONS

A. Situation

During periods of an emergency, information regarding protective actions to minimize loss of life and property will be provided to the public. There could be occasions when disaster strikes without warning and the public information system cannot react rapidly enough to properly inform the public. For this reason, it is important that the public be prepared for potential hazards and protective measures that could be employed prior to an emergency occurrence.

B. Assumptions

1. An effective program combining both education and emergency information can significantly reduce loss of life and property. However, many people will not participate in or retain pre-emergency education until they are affected. Special emphasis must be placed on the delivery of information during emergencies and disasters.
2. Local media will be requested to disseminate warnings and EPI during emergency situations and may participate in pre-disaster awareness programs and other disaster education activities.
3. Some emergency situations may generate significant media interest beyond the local level which may overwhelm the available EPI staff.
4. The primary agency PIO will take the lead role in public information issues and will be supported by other City PIO as needed.

V. CONCEPT OF OPERATIONS

A. General

1. Emergency information efforts should focus on specific event-related incidents. Generally, this information will be of an instructional nature focusing on preparedness, warnings, evacuations, and shelters. Appendix 1 describes some basic emergency information needs.
2. Special efforts should be made to keep the public informed of the progress of events. Regarding emergency response, reporting positive information will assure the community that the situation is under control. Public feedback should be used as a measure of the program's effectiveness to control rumors that may spread throughout a community.
3. Educational efforts are to be directed toward increasing public awareness about potential hazards and how people should prepare for them. All information will rely heavily on the cooperation from all types of media organizations.

B. Information Dissemination

1. In the initial stages of an emergency situation, the Local Warning Point (LWP) may take action on time-sensitive hazards. Within the limits of the authority delegated to it, the City's LWP is the Houston Police Department's Emergency Communications Division located at the Houston Emergency Center, in coordination with the Office of Emergency Management (OEM), will determine if a warning needs to be issued, formulate a warning if necessary, and disseminate it.
2. As Emergency Alert System (EAS) messages are limited to two minutes, EAS warning messages may have to be supplemented with Special News

Advisories prepared by the Public Information Officer (PIO) that contains additional emergency information. Special News Advisories are generally disseminated to media outlets by e-mail or fax.

- a. Broadcasters and cable companies must carry national security warnings and messages initiated by the President; they may broadcast alerts and messages initiated by state and local governments. The Federal Communications Commission encourages licensees to broadcast local warning and instruction messages, but the final decision on broadcasting such messages rests with the broadcasters.
 - b. Broadcasters and cable operators will expect EAS to be used for life-threatening emergencies.
3. If an incident command operation is implemented for an emergency situation, the Incident Commander (IC) may warn the public in and around the incident site, if the condition warrants. The IC may request the assistance of a PIO to provide information on the emergency situation to the media if the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) has not been activated.
4. Once the EOC has been activated for an emergency situation, the EOC Controller, in coordination with the Emergency Management Coordinator (EMC) or designee, will determine the need for additional warnings and instructions. The PIO staff will formulate additional warning messages and public instructions. The LWP will execute warnings by activating the warning system. The OEM will be responsible for transmitting EAS messages to the local designated primary EAS radio station for re-broadcasting. The PIO staff will disseminate Special News Advisories and other EPI materials to the media directly.
5. In the case of large-scale emergencies or disasters where there are substantial external responders from other jurisdictions and/or state or federal agencies and the response and recovery effort may continue for an extended period, a Joint Information Center (JIC) may be established. The JIC is a working facility where the emergency public information efforts of all participating jurisdictions, agencies, volunteer organizations, and other responders can be coordinated to ensure consistency and accuracy. In federally declared disasters, a JIC will typically be set up as part of the Disaster Field Office.
6. The following means may be used to provide emergency information and instructions to the public:
 - a. EAS broadcasts by radio, television, and cable companies.
 - b. Special news broadcasts by radio, television, and cable companies.
 - c. Local newspapers.

- d. Local cable government municipal channel.
- e. Telephone warning - Neighborhood Early Warning System (NEWS).
- f. Mobile units with public address systems.
- g. The local government Internet site.
- h. NOAA Weather Radio for all hazards

C. Providing Emergency Information to Special Populations

Special populations will be provided information on emergency situations and appropriate instructions by the following methods:

- 1. Visually-impaired: EAS messages and news advisories on radio, NOAA Weather Radio, or door-to-door notification
- 2. Hearing-impaired: Captioned EAS messages and news advisories on television, print media
- 3. Non-English Speakers: Radio, TV, newspaper and other appropriate means

D. Resources

The PIO shall maintain a Media Roster that contains the names, telephone and facsimile numbers, and E-mail addresses of each of the media resources listed below. See Appendix 2 for an example.

- 1. Broadcast Television
- 2. Cable Television
- 3. Radio
- 4. Newspapers
- 5. Other

Emergency preparedness information is published annually in the SBC Greater Houston Residence White Pages telephone directory.

E. Phases of Management

- 1. Mitigation
 - a. Conduct hazard awareness programs.
 - b. Develop systems to enhance information dissemination during emergency situations.
- 2. Preparedness
 - a. Develop and distribute educational materials; conduct public education programs.
 - b. Prepare emergency information for release during emergencies.

- c. Brief local media on local warning systems and coordinate procedures for transmitting emergency information to media.
 - d. Conduct public education on warning systems and the actions that should be taken for various types of warnings.
 - e. Train public information staff.
 - f. Brief local officials and emergency responders on working with the media. See Appendix 3.
 - g. Maintain this annex.
 - h. Identify suitable facilities for a Joint Information Center.
- 3. Response
 - a. Develop and release EPI.
 - b. Conduct media monitoring to determine the need to clarify issues and distribute updated public instructions.
 - c. Conduct news conferences and arrange interviews as needed to manage rumor control.
- 4. Recovery
 - a. Provide public information relating to recovery process and programs.
 - b. Compile record of events.
 - c. Assess effectiveness of public information and education program.
- 5. Prevention
 - a. Applying intelligence and other information to a range of activities including countermeasures as deterrence operations.
 - b. Security operations.
 - c. Investigations to determine the full nature and source of the threat.
 - d. Public health and agricultural surveillance and testing.
 - e. Law enforcement operations aimed at deterring, preempting, interdicting or disrupting illegal activity and apprehending perpetrators.

VI. ORGANIZATION & ASSIGNMENT OF RESPONSIBILITIES

A. General

- 1. The responsibility for ensuring the availability of EPI rests with the OEM. EPI prepared by PIOs will be coordinated through the EOC prior to dissemination.
- 2. The PIO will work in close coordination with the EMC or designee. In addition, the PIO will coordinate with other City department PIOs for

timely releasing of information to the public during periods of EOC activation.

3. A PIO may be designated by City departments, such as Police, Fire, Health, Public Works, Solid Waste, Parks and Recreation, and representatives of private agencies such as the Greater Houston Area Chapter of the American Red Cross, the Salvation Army and CenterPoint Energy who may be represented in the EOC during periods of activation. Along with the EOC's PIO, each PIO shall serve as the liaison between their respective organizations to ensure that current, pertinent and accurate information is available for dissemination to the media for the public's review.
 - a. Each entity shall be responsible for maintaining a current list of key personnel and resources in their department.
 - b. Each entity will be responsible for submitting information to their PIO in writing with a copy to the EMC or designee.

B. Task Assignments

1. EMC or designee
 - a. Request that a PIO be available
 - b. Ensure public information and educational programs are developed and maintained
 - c. Provide official public information
 - d. Authorize release of information to the media
 - e. Conduct public education programs as an ongoing activity utilizing present Emergency Management staff.
2. Lead PIO or designee assignments
 - a. Coordinate emergency public information with news media (i.e., storms, significant health issues, significant law enforcement issues and Weapons of Mass Destruction issues)
 - b. When an emergency has occurred, develop warning messages and public instructions for the specific situation at hand
 - c. Ensure PIO representation in JIC during activation
 - d. Conduct media briefings in the vicinity of the EOC.
 - e. Maintain 24-hour media contact roster
 - f. Periodically brief the media on local warning systems and warning procedures.
 - g. Coordinate PIO training through OEM
3. Joint Information Center (JIC) – Comprised from a pool of PIOs from the

City of Houston and/or outside agencies.

- a. Direct EPI efforts.
- b. Serve as an official City of Houston spokesperson and as a primary source for dissemination of official EPI materials to the public.
- c. Coordinate with the Mayor's office.
- d. After coordinating with the EMC or designee, provide news releases for the media.
- e. Develop newspaper articles, TV and radio stories and Public Service Announcements for dissemination of EPI materials to the public which will include materials for the visually impaired and non-English speaking groups.
- f. Develop oral agreements with broadcast media (radio and TV stations, cable TV, etc) to receive and disseminate warning messages and emergency information.
- g. Maintain a record of events.
- h. Inform department Directors and administrative staff about media access procedures (see Appendix 4).
- i. Prior to release, authenticate sources of information and verify for accuracy.
- j. Provide for the dissemination of emergency warnings with the media.
- k. Secure printed and photographic documentation of the emergency/disaster situation.
- l. Compile and prepare information for the public in case of an emergency.
- m. Handle unscheduled inquiries from the media and the public.
- n. Inform the public about places of contact for missing relatives, emergency services, or restricted areas.
- o. Coordinate with state and federal PIOs.

VII. DIRECTION & CONTROL

A. General

1. The EMC has overall responsibility for the EPI program and shall provide general guidance for emergency-related public education and informational activities.
2. The PIO shall direct all EPI activities, coordinating as necessary with other individuals, departments, and agencies performing other emergency functions.

3. The PIO shall release all information to the public and the media during emergency operations. During emergency operations, departments and agencies shall refer media inquiries to the PIO.

B. Line of Succession.

The line of succession for each department and agency represented in the EOC are according to the Standard Operating Procedures of each department and agency.

VIII. READINESS LEVELS

Refer to the City's Basic Plan, Volume I, section 3.2.2.

IX. ADMINISTRATION & SUPPORT

A. Media Contact Roster

The PIO shall maintain a contact roster for the media organizations that are involved in local emergency management programs. A sample is provided in Appendix 2.

B. Records

1. The PIO shall maintain a file of all news advisories and press releases issued during emergency operations.
2. The PIO shall compile and maintain copies of newspaper articles, videotapes of emergency operations and news broadcasts relating to an emergency, and other media materials that may be distributed for use in post-incident analysis and future training activities.

C. Educational Programs

1. The OEM shall conduct disaster educational programs to increase citizen preparedness. Educational programs may include presentations in schools, civic organizations, displays at local public gatherings, community meetings, distribution of educational materials, and other activities. The local media will be encouraged to assist with activities and local businesses may be willing to sponsor events and assist with costs. Educational brochures may also be distributed with regularly scheduled government, utility, or business mailings.
2. The OEM is expected to obtain and maintain materials for disaster-related public education. A wide variety of educational materials dealing with emergency management and disaster preparedness are available such as pamphlets, posters, videotapes and complete training curricula for school children. Many publications are available in ready-to-distribute form or as fact sheets whose content may be incorporated into locally developed materials. Materials available include emergency preparedness information of general interest and specialized preparedness publications for school children, the elderly, and people with various disabilities.

Public education materials relating to emergency management are available in a variety of foreign languages.

3. The principal providers of disaster-related educational materials are the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), the American Red Cross (ARC), and the Governor's Division of Emergency Management (GDEM); many agencies and volunteer organizations also publish specialized disaster-related educational materials. FEMA publishes a catalog of their publications and both FEMA and the ARC include educational materials on their web sites; see Section XI, References, for their addresses. The GDEM also distributes hazard-specific awareness materials periodically throughout the year to local EMCs as part of state awareness campaigns.

D. Training

Members of the EPI staff should consider attending public information training; preferably training focusing on EPI activities. The GDEM and FEMA offer PIO training.

X. ANNEX DEVELOPMENT & MAINTENANCE

- A. Development. The EMC is responsible for developing and maintaining this annex.
- B. Maintenance. This annex will be reviewed annually and updated in accordance with the schedule outlined in section 1.4.4 of the City of Houston Basic Plan, Volume I.

XI. REFERENCES

- A. FEMA, *FEMA Publications Catalog*
- B. FEMA, *Guide to All-Hazard Emergency Operations Planning* (SLG-101)
- C. FEMA web site: www.fema.gov
- D. American Red Cross web site: www.redcross.org

APPENDICES:

Appendix 1	Emergency Public Information Needs
Appendix 2.....	Media Contact Roster
Appendix 3.....	Working With the Media
Appendix 4.....	Media Access & Identification
Appendix 5.....	List of Pre-Scripted Emergency Messages
Appendix 6.....	Emergency Public Information Checklists

APPENDIX 1 TO ANNEX I

EMERGENCY PUBLIC INFORMATION NEEDS

I. Background

During emergency situations, it is important to provide the general public with adequate information on a situation as rapidly as possible to alleviate concerns and reduce the likelihood of panic or inappropriate actions. The news media is the primary means of disseminating information, by providing up-to-date information quickly to a wide audience. The information the media provides reduces the time and manpower that local government would have to divert from response and recovery tasks to deal with the overwhelming number of inquiries from the public. Every effort should be made to cooperate with the news media in providing information and in recognition of the rights of the news media to perform their proper function.

II. Information Needs

The following types of information shall be provided to the public as soon as possible in as much detail as possible.

A. What Happened

1. Nature of incident or emergency
2. Location
3. Time of occurrence
4. Situation resolved or response on-going
5. Cause (Until an investigation has determined the cause with reasonable certainty, it is not advisable to speculate.)

B. Current Response Actions

What actions have been or are being taken to protect public health and safety and public and private property?

C. Known Damages

1. Homes
2. Businesses
3. Government buildings
4. Infrastructure – roads, bridges, parks, etc.

D. Casualties

1. Number dead
2. Number injured
3. Number missing
4. General identification of casualties – age, sex, situation (if known)

5. Names of casualties will not be released except when special circumstances dictate otherwise
- E. Evacuations
 1. Areas and facilities evacuated
 2. Approximate number of evacuees
 - F. Shelter & Mass Care
 1. Shelters open – name and location
 2. Approximate number of persons being housed in shelters
 3. Mass feeding site or other mass care facilities in operation – name, location, and number of persons being served
 - G. Status of Utilities
 1. Electric service
 2. Telephone system
 3. Water system
 4. Sewer system
 5. Natural gas distribution
 - H. Road and Facility Closures
 - I. Organizations Responding
 1. Local government
 2. State agencies
 3. Federal agencies
 4. Volunteer groups
 - J. Means of contacting evacuees
 - K. Areas to which access is restricted and the reason(s) for such restriction
 - L. For ongoing emergency situations, planned response activities
-set-up public “hot line” number
 - M. In the recovery phase:
 1. Disaster assistance programs available
 2. How to apply for disaster assistance
- III. Collection and Dissemination of Information
- Information shall be collected and disseminated as soon as possible by the appropriate personnel as follows:
- A. Where an ICP has been established and a qualified public information staff member is at the scene, those individuals may provide information directly to the media if the EOC is not activated. If no qualified public information staff

member is present at the scene, the IC or a member of his staff should pass situation information to the PIO for release to the media.

- B. Where an ICP has been established and the EOC has been activated, information from the incident scene will be passed to the PIO at the EOC. The EOC PIO will utilize reports from the scene and other available pertinent information to brief the media and prepare news advisories for release to the media.
- C. The OEM, in coordination with the ARC, is responsible for collecting information on shelter and mass care activities and providing that information to the EOC PIO.
- D. The Utilities representatives in the EOC are responsible for obtaining information on the status of utilities and providing it to the EOC PIO.
- E. Law Enforcement and Public Works/Engineering are responsible for obtaining information on road closures and facility closures and providing it to the EOC PIO.
- F. The EOC PIO is responsible for collection of information from the IC, the EOC staff, and other sources and agencies. The EOC PIO staff is responsible for preparation of news releases, dissemination of information directly to the news media and, where appropriate, for making arrangements for announcements directly to the public via radio and/or television hookups.
- G. Hospitals are responsible for dissemination of information concerning casualties and deaths. They generally have policies restricting the release of detailed information without permission of patients or their families. The information they choose to release will normally be disseminated directly to the news media. The EOC PIO should request that the EOC be provided copies of any information released to the media.

APPENDIX 2 TO ANNEX I
MEDIA CONTACT ROSTER

I. Radio

Station call letters:

- A. Address:
- B. Frequency & Operating Hours:
- C. Contact Name:
- D. Telephone Number/Fax Number:
- E. E-mail Address:

II. Television

Station call letters:

- A. Address:
- B. Frequency & Operating Hours:
- C. Contact Name:
- D. Telephone Number/Fax Number:
- E. E-mail Address:

III. Cable Television Company

Name:

- A. Address:
- B. Service Area:
- C. Contact Name:
- D. Telephone Number
- E. Fax Number:
- F. E-mail Address

IV. Newspapers

Name:

- A. Address:
- B. Distribution Area:
- C. Contact Name:
- D. Telephone Number
- E. Fax Number:
- F. E-mail Address

The above information is maintained by departmental PIOs.

APPENDIX 3 TO ANNEX I

WORKING WITH THE MEDIA

- I. What to do when working with the media:
 - A. Identify your spokesperson beforehand.
 - B. Have a number the media know to call when they need information.
 - C. Make certain the person answering the phones knows to whom to direct media calls.
 - D. Get all the information you can from those in charge before you talk with the media.
 - E. Write out the answers to these questions for your use:
 - 1. What happened?
 - 2. When did it happen?
 - 3. Where did it happen?
 - 4. How many were hurt or killed?
 - 5. Can I shoot video/take photos? How close can I get?
 - 6. Who can I talk to?
 - 7. What is your agency doing about it?
- II. When you talk with the media:
 - A. Tell the truth.
 - B. Be courteous and don't play favorites.
 - C. Avoid "off the record" remarks.
 - D. Never say anything you would not want to see printed or broadcast.
 - E. Stay on top of the interview by listening to the reporter's questions.
 - F. Don't accept the reporter's definitions of what happened.
 - G. Pause, think; ask for more time if you need it.
 - H. Respond only to the question you've been asked. Don't speculate.
 - I. Stick to the core message.

APPENDIX 4 TO ANNEX I

MEDIA ACCESS & IDENTIFICATION

I. Media Access

In recognition of the public's right to know information regarding a disaster, local response agencies will cooperate with legitimate news media representatives and provide equal access to information and, within the limits of safety and other response needs, access to incident scene to various news organizations. News media representatives are required to cooperate with response personnel as directed for safety and efficient operation.

- A. The IC or his designated representative will allow media access to the incident scene as is consistent with safety and does not disrupt critical operations.
- B. The EMC, in coordination with the PIO, shall establish rules for media access to the EOC. When the EOC is activated, representatives of news media may be provided access to those areas of the EOC designated by the EMC. As a general rule, press briefings will not be conducted in the EOC because they can disrupt on-going EOC operations; briefings will normally be conducted in the designated press area of the EOC. Photo shoots may be conducted in the EOC, but these should be scheduled to minimize disruption.
- C. Hospitals establish their own rules of access for news media representatives and these may vary for individual circumstances. For emergency situations where there have been substantial casualties, it may be desirable for hospitals to provide a press room or other designated area with access to telephones for the use of news media representatives.
- D. When incident scenes are on private property, the property owner may establish and enforce policies with regard to access by the media and other persons who are not emergency responders.

II. Media Identification

Representatives of news media will be considered to have satisfactory identification if they have:

- A. A media company identification card with photo that identifies them as a media representative, unless there is reason to believe that the identification is not genuine.
- B. Houston Police Department Press identification card.

APPENDIX 5 TO ANNEX I
LIST OF PRE-SCRIPTED EMERGENCY MESSAGES

The City of Houston does not maintain a list of pre-scripted emergency messages.

APPENDIX 6 TO ANNEX I
EMERGENCY PUBLIC INFORMATION CHECKLISTS

The City of Houston does not maintain emergency checklists.